DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 125 219 EC 090 487

AUTHOR McCormack, James E., Jr.
TITLE Educational Evaluation and Planning Package: A Rationale.
INSTITUTION Massachusetts Center for Program Development and Evaluation, Medford.
PUB DATE Feb 76
NOTE 11p.; See EC 090 488 for a related document

EDRS PRICE MF-$0.83 HC-$1.67 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS *Checklists; Diagnostic Teaching; *Educational Diagnosis; Elementary Secondary Education; Evaluation Methods; Exceptional Child Education; *Handicapped Children; *Individualized Instruction; State Legislation; *Student Evaluation
IDENTIFIERS *Individual Educational Plans; Massachusetts; Student Evaulation Teams

ABSTRACT

The Core Evaluation Team (CET), as required by Massachusetts' special education law Chapter 766, is staffed to perform all the assessments necessary to develop a comprehensive individualized educational plan for the child with special needs. To assist in the assessment procedure, the Massachusetts Department of Education provides a guide which includes checklists for the following areas: motor development, activities of daily living, expressive and receptive language, reading, quantitative reasoning, and socialization. A review of the literature shows general agreement regarding the deficits of formal tests, particularly intelligence tests. As an alternative to using IQ tests as a basis for student placement, the Education Evaluation and Planning Package continues the performance statement checklist approach to assessment and provides the CET with the information necessary to develop individually appropriate education plans. (SB)

****
* Documents acquired by ERIC include many informal unpublished *
* materials not available from other sources. ERIC makes every effort *
* to obtain the best copy available. Nevertheless, items of marginal *
* reproducibility are often encountered and this affects the quality *
* of the microfiche and hardcopy reproductions ERIC makes available *
* via the ERIC Document Reproduction Service (EDRS). EDRS is not *
* responsible for the quality of the original document. Reproductions *
* supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made from the original. *
****

ED125219

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION

THIS DOCUMENT HAS BEEN REPRODUCED EXACTLY AS RECEIVED FROM THE PERSON OR ORGANIZATION ORIGINATING IT. POINTS OF VIEW OR OPINIONS STATED DO NOT NECESSARILY REPRESENT OFFICIAL NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION POSITION OR POLICY

MASSACHUSETTS CENTER FOR PROGRAM
DEVELOPMENT AND EVALUATION
10 Hall Avenue
Medford, MA 02155

EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND PLANNING PACKAGE: A RATIONALE

by
James E. McCormack

February 1976

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE THIS COPYRIGHTED MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY

James E. Mc Cormack

TO ERIC AND ORGANIZATIONS OPERATING UNDER AGREEMENTS WITH THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE OF EDUCATION. FURTHER REPRODUCTION OUTSIDE THE ERIC SYSTEM REQUIRES PERMISSION OF THE COPYRIGHT OWNER.

EC090487

EDUCATIONAL EVALUATION AND PLANNING PACKAGE: A RATIONALE

Background Information on the Core Evaluation Assessment Process

In an attempt to insure that meaningful educational opportunities are provided for all children with special needs, Massachusetts' comprehensive special education law, Chapter 766 (of the Acts of 1972) requires an intensive evaluation of the referred child's educational needs. Specificially, the law establishes minimum standards for educational assessment procedures and placement decisions. The assessment procedure consists of two elements: first, a series of detailed assessments to identify the child's educational needs and, second, a planning process to develop a prescriptive educational plan that meets those needs.

In the belief that a multi-discipline approach provides the most effective means of determining individual educational needs, Chapter 766 requires that educational assessments be made by an evaluation team. The Core Evaluation Team (CET) is staffed so that it can perform all the assessments necessary to develop a comprehensive individualized educational plan. The CET's assessment and planning process takes into account medical, intellectual, social, emotional and educational aspects of the child's development. To obtain essential information, a series of assessments are conducted by various CET members. From the information collected, the CET must develop an individually appropriate educational plan with specific objectives. The entire effort is designed to shift the emphasis in educational planning from the categorical group to the individual child.

The development of educational plans with specific objectives requires that assessment results be in clear, concise and complete statements. In order to insure that assessments produce accurate statements about a child, the Massachusetts Department of Education requires that certain procedures to be followed in reporting assessment results and in developing educational plans. Those procedures resulted from a comprehensive review of the literature relating to the assessment of educational needs. The Department's recommendations include a process in which various assessors (parents, teachers, specialists, etc.) record their perceptions of a student's ability to perform specific measurable skills, i.e., puts on hat, walks down stairs one at a time, adds single digit numbers not requiring carrying, etc. To assist assessors, the Department produced the "Reference Guide to Performance Statements". The guide included checklists in the following areas: motor development, activities of daily living, expressive and receptive language, reading, quantitative reasoning, and socialization.

The checklist approach was the Department's attempt to insure that the assessment information reported to the CET be behaviorally based and an accurate reflection of the child's actual levels of functioning. In the past, the information resulting from educational and psychological assessments has ranged from highly relevant to absolutely useless. The checklists were intended to be used as a reporting format in the educational performance and home visit assessments. That is, the reporter/assessor goes through the checklists indicating the child's level of performance, based on observation and, if necessary, performs an in-situ evaluation of a particular skill. If discrepancies in responding or a need for more information arises, the psychologist/coordinator of assessments meets

with the child and assesses those skill areas' strengths and weaknesses.

By using the checklists, the assessors can report the results of their assessments in terms of the checklists' performance statements. The assessment team can use these statements to determine appropriate goals as well as a basis for developing the specific objectives section of the education plan. Performance terms provide a basis for common communication among team members and for later analyzing the student's progress. In the process of determining appropriate objectives, the Guides, because of their developmental format, can also assist teams in meeting the criteria which the Department established for education plans: (a) that they be developmentally rational, (b) reflect parental priorities, (c) relate to the student's movement toward a less restrictive educational setting, and (d) be measurable.

Review of the Literature

In developing this Education Evaluation and Planning Package, the performance statement checklist approach to assessment has been continued. This approach has a solid basis in the literature and reflects a movement away from traditional assessment procedures. The traditional concept of assessment in regard to the special needs child has been the standardized test, most often the standardized intelligence test. The IQ test, as well as most other formal assessment instruments, has almost universally been used to determine a categorical group label, i.e., mentally retarded, emotionally disturbed, etc., and historically special class placement has followed based on disability category, not individual needs. Recently,

however, many educators have questioned special class placement based on a few formal tests, especially where primary focus was given to an intelligence score. In part, questioning occurred because many educators concluded that intelligence is a hypothetical construct rather than a concrete item (Throne, 1972), and thus that intelligence is not open to direct observation and measurement (Robinson and Robinson, 1965). Others have questioned whether intelligence tests can even measure present functioning, let alone intellectual potential. Throne (1972) suggests that intelligence tests be eliminated altogether and that educators concentrate on finding out how to produce "intelligent" behavior instead of attempting to predict "intelligence".

Historically, the intelligence test was developed by Binet to serve as a device to identify learners who required special assistance (Freeman, 1962). However, functionally it has served to legitimize the social, education and emotional segregation of those very children it was designed to help. For many years, despite considerable evidence (Clark, 1967) to the contrary, the standardized intelligence test has remained unassailed in its position as the chief deviance confirmer. Only recently have special educators and minority groups, using the courts, successfully challenged its power to determine who would and who would not be placed in special classes.

Formal tests have seldom provided the teacher with the type of detailed information required to develop meaningful educational programs (Hammill, 1971). Barnes (1973) and Mercer (1973) indicate that intelligence tests are useful for placing children into categorical groups but that they offer

little aid in providing a basis for prescriptive teaching. There is substantial evidence to indicate that intelligence test scores of children with special needs have little relationship to actual performance (Wolfensberger, 1967; Albin, 1973; Rammarauskat and Burrow, 1973). Many educators and parents, impatient with the controversy over intelligence tests, have demanded alternatives.

As alternatives, many special educators, supported by behavioral psychologists and parents, have attempted to develop systems for making more precise behavioral descriptions of a child's levels of functioning. The need for functional assessment detailing a child's strengths and weaknesses has become obvious as special educators have been required by the courts or State and/or Federal regulations to develop individually appropriate educational plans. Specific diagnostic statements allow the teacher to prescribe more appropriate instructional objectives/methods and materials, while at the same time they facilitate the communication between those responsible for the student's education (parents, teachers, administrators, etc.)

Although there is general agreement on the deficits of formal tests, especially intelligence tests, there is little agreement on an alternative assessment device. The recommendations have ranged from prolonged diagnostic placement to EEG analysis. Many recommendations involve the use of a selected short-duration behavior sample assessed with a standardized device to provide information designed to answer specific questions (ITPA, WISC, etc.) Unfortunately, these devices, like the intelligence test, are based on a behavior sample that is not necessarily representative

of the child's actual abilities. The results are often not representative because of the unusual environmental conditions under which the assessment occurs. These devices are also usually incapable of providing the specific information required to select individually appropriate objectives.

One method intended to avoid the pitfalls of "representative" items is the assessment of all behaviors in the skill cluster about which the assessor has to make diagnostic statements, and the basing of those statements on an extended observation period rather than a short behavior sample. The major drawback to this approach is the time required for one assessor to observe the student to ensure that he performs all the behaviors under investigation (Nunnally, 1964; Lindsley, 1970). An additional drawback involves the time and paper required to record the results. Since both extended observation and assessment of all behaviors within a cluster are essential to move away from traditional assessment procedures, it is necessary to find procedures that minimize the difficulties. One solution is to increase the number of observers and thus make it possible to collect the required information without one individual spending an extended period observing the student. The use of multi-observers also decreases the effect of biased reporting. However, it is also necessary to develop a procedure that allows the various assessors to rapidly report performance over a wide variety of skill clusters.

One device commonly used in a multi-reporter, ongoing experience assessment is the rating format. This format lists all the behaviors or skills to be rated and various performance categories, i.e., does all the time,

does some of the time, etc. Early rating devices were often referred to as "scales", and they generally required raters to report on selected representative behaviors. A number of rating scales were developed specifically to assess the abilities of various "special" populations. Some of the rating scales frequently used with special needs children are the Cain-Levine Social Competency Scale, the Vineland Social Maturity Scale, and the Haggerty-Olsen-Wickerman Rating Scale. Generally, rating scales attempt to determine the child's behavior by having the assessor conduct an interview with an individual who knows the child well enough to report on the child's habitual or typical performance in regard to each item. As previously stated, the nature of the items generally requires that the rater have had considerable opportunity to observe the child in various situations (Freeman, 1962). Since these scales generally rely on selected representative items to assess broad behavior clusters, they have some of the same drawbacks as standardized tests. While probably less contaminated than formal tests, rating scales are not without internal problems. All rating scales are subject to the rater's observation skills, biases, values and standards (Cain, Levine and Elzey, 1963). For example, the rater's frame of reference, the reason for obtaining the report and/or the interviewer's technique can all influence the rater's evaluation of the child's competencies (Cain, Levine and Elzey, 1963). One way of minimizing the effects of inaccurate reporting is to obtain ratings from several different individuals and to use a rating format that does not require an interviewer.

The Educational Evaluation and Planning Package is designed to minimize the various negative aspects of assessment devices indicated in the literature

while at the same time providing a practical assessment device for use by the classroom teacher, parent, etc. If used as designed the Educational Evaluation and Planning Package should provide, within acceptable time constraints, the team with the information necessary to develop individually appropriate education plans.

References

Albin, T. Relationships of IQ and Previous Work Experience to Success in Sheltered Employment. Mental Retardation, 1973, 11, (3).

Barnes E. Cultural Retardation or Shortcomings of Assessment Techniques. In R. Jones and D. McMillan (eds.), Special Education in Transition. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1973.

Cain, L., Levine, S., and Elzey, F. The Cain-Levine Social Competency Scale: Manual. Palo Alto: Consulting Psychologists Press, 1963.

Clark, G. A Synopsis of Mental Retardation. Elwyn, PA: Elwyn Institute, 1967.

Freeman, F. Theory and Practice of Psychological Testing. New York: Hold, Rinehart and Winston, 1962.

Hammill, D. Evaluating Children for Instructional Purposes. Academic Therapy, 1971, 4, 119-132.

Lindsley, O. Direct Measurement and Prosthesis of Retarded Behavior. In R. Jones (ed.), New Directions in Special Education. Boston: Allyn and Bacon, 1970.

Massachusetts Department of Education, Division of Special Education. Core Evaluation Manual (First Edition). Bedford, MA: Institute for Educational Services, Inc., 1974.

Mercer, J. Labeling the Mentally Retarded. Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973.

Nunnally, J. Educational Measurement and Evaluation. New York: McGraw Hill Book Company, 1964.

Rammanauska, S., and Burrow, W. WISC Profiles: Above Average and Mentally Retarded Readers. Mental Retardation, 1973, 11, (2).

Robinson, H., and Robinson, N. The Mentally Retarded: A Psychological Approach. New York: McGraw Hill, 1965.

Throne, J. The Assessment of Intelligence: Towards What End. Mental Retardation. 1972, 10, (5).

Wolfensberger, W. Vocational Preparation. In A. Baumeister (ed.), Mental Retardation: Appraisal, Education and Rehabilitation. Chicago: Alpine Company, 1967.